



Weston Village BIA Comprehensive Strategic Plan

June 2023

Prepared by Gladki Planning Associates Inc.



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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The Weston Village Business Improvement Area (WVBIA) has initiated the process of creating a 4-year strategic plan and has retained Gladki Planning Associates Inc., (GPA) to assist in the preparation of this plan. The BIA board intends to adopt a strategic plan that is action-oriented and advances Weston Village's vision for the future. The strategic plan includes detailed actions and implementation strategies to address the unique opportunities for improvement that exist in Weston Village, leveraging assets and mapping a path to address challenges overtime with available resources. Weston Village has prepared this strategic plan to provide direction to the BIA for short, mid, and long-term objectives, as well, to positively energize the community with a renewed focus on accessing, enhancing, and enjoying the commercial hub of the community.

Various reports and studies that have been conducted in Weston Village in the past 40 years have focused on supporting the built and retail environment. These reports have identified similar strengths and assets possessed by the community as well as persistent challenges facing Weston Village. Currently, Weston Village is experiencing change and growth, in part due to development pressure and expanded GO/UP transit service. With many changes planned across the York South-Weston community, the creation of the BIA's first strategic plan is timely. As Weston Village continues to intensify with increasing development, the BIA will be an integral part in not only shaping the growth that is anticipated in the community but in retaining and enhancing the vibrancy and vitality of the wider community.

The purpose of this document is to outline the vision of the Weston Village BIA and describe actions that can be taken to implement that vision. This document is comprised of several sections.

Plan Creation

The creation of the strategic plan was completed in 2 phases. The objective of the first phase was to analyze existing conditions, community assets, and challenges through a background review and an inclusive and creative community engagement programme. The creation of the of the strategic plan was directly informed by the input of stakeholders including BIA staff, Business Owners, BIA Board Members, existing community associations, and the wider Weston Village community. GPA coordinated a robust and successful engagement program which consisted of six different engagement activities. The purpose of the second phase was to create strategic objectives and a detailed action plan that will realize these goals.

Current Landscape

An analysis of the current state of the WVBIA and the Weston Village Community was conducted as part of the first phase of this project. strengths, opportunities and aspirations were identified through robust community engagement and review of existing reports and studies. Weston Village has many strengths and assets that can be leveraged and enhanced to advance the overall goals of the BIA. These include the community's unique cultural heritage, proximity to the Humber River, active and involved community associations, and a diverse resident population. Our assessment pf these strengths, opportunities and aspirations formed the basis for the strategic directions included in this plan.

BIA Mission, Vision and Strategic Directions

Seven strategic directions have been identified as essential towards advancing the BIA's mission and vision. The strategic directions reinforce one another, and prioritize building capacity within the local community, tailoring improvements to reflect the daily needs of residents who are currently located within Weston. The directions are as follows:

1. Improve the visibility of the BIA among business owners and expand business owner engagement in the BIA.
2. Implement the Streetscape Master Plan.
3. Publicize and promote a positive Image of Weston in the local community and with other communities.
4. Include and engage youth in community decision-making.
5. Make Weston Village an inviting and memorable community where people feel comfortable and have a sense of belonging.
6. Attract a diversity of businesses to create a rich business landscape in Weston Village.
7. Increase financial capacity of the BIA.

Implementation Plan

Each strategic direction includes details on responsibility, specific actions, timeframe, capacity, and anticipated reward.

Evaluation

Evaluating the strategic plan is necessary to assess progress made on the organization's strategic directions. GPA recommends the use of both outcome and process evaluations at annual intervals to track progress towards strategic objectives.

Recommendations for Success

To best implement the strategic plan, GPA has provided seven recommendations. These recommendations apply across all seven strategic directions.

- Communicating with Developers.
- Meaningful Change Mindset.
- Focus on community improvement that meets the needs of the people already living in Weston Village.
- Report on progress at each Board Meeting.
- Connect with professors and course instructors at post-secondary institutions to complete some of the action items.
- Additional BIA Staff.
- Cost-sharing.

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Introduction

Project Background

The Weston Village Business Improvement Area (WVBIA) has initiated the process of creating a 4-year strategic plan and has retained Gladki Planning Associates Inc., (GPA) to assist in the preparation of this plan. The strategic plan is an action-oriented road-map for the BIA's Board and Staff over the next 4 years. It provides a complete vision for the BIA and a process for achieving this vision.



What is a Strategic Plan?

Strategic planning is a process used by organizations to determine a vision, key objectives and future goals and a plan on how to get them together.

A strategic plan defines an organization, articulates its vision and lists concrete actions towards achieving its goals. It is a comprehensive plan of action that identifies steps to advance a shared vision and organizational goals.

The strategic plan can be used as a decision-making tool, and provides a process to evaluate and reflect on the actions, advancements, and use of resources of an organization. Strategic plans provide a big picture, cohesive vision beyond the typical budget cycle.

Weston Village has prepared this strategic plan to provide direction to the BIA for short-, mid-, and long-term objectives, as well, to positively energize the community with a renewed focus on accessing, enhancing, and enjoying the commercial hub of the



Figure 1 - 3: Photos of Weston Road within the BIA boundary.

community.

What is a BIA?

A Business Improvement Area (BIA) is a local board that has been approved by municipal council that allows local business people, commercial property owners and tenants to join together, and with support from the municipality, to organize, finance, and carry out physical improvements and promote economic development in their district.

The Weston Village BIA is one of the oldest BIA's in Toronto. It is located in the north-west end of Toronto at the intersection of Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue. The BIA extends north along Weston Road to Church Street, south to Wilby Crescent, and covers the area between Hickory Tree Road and South Station Street moving east to west along Lawrence Avenue (See Figure 4). The business area reflects the cultural diversity of the surrounding community and consists of an eclectic mix of over 160 stores, services and professional offices. The Weston Village BIA is governed by a board of management.

In Toronto, the general functions of a BIA are as follows:

- to oversee the improvement, beautification and maintenance of municipally-owned land, buildings and structures in the area beyond that are generally provided at the expense of the municipality;
- to promote the area as a business or shopping area;
- to maintain BIA-initiated streetscaping and capital assets within the business improvement area;
- to offer graffiti and poster removal services respecting building facades visible from the street, to all member property owners who

- provide written consent, upon approval of the program by the general membership of the BIA;
- to undertake safety and security initiatives within the business improvement area;
- to undertake strategic planning necessary to address BIA issues; and
- to advocate on behalf of the interests of the BIA.

The Weston Village BIA has undertaken a number of activities coordinating business interests across the Weston Village Community. It also organizes special events including the Weston Farmer's Market, Buskerfest, Mother's Day Pop-ups and Winterfest.

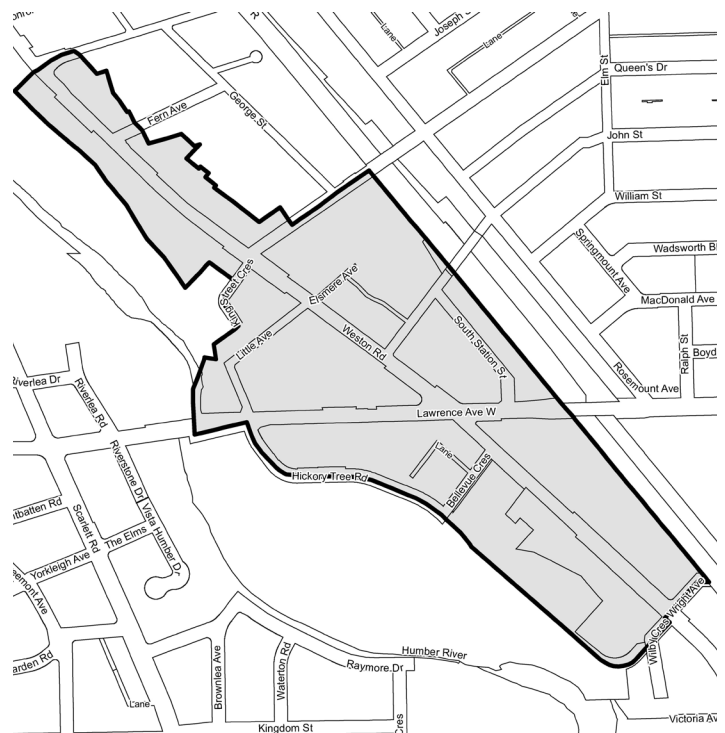


Figure 4 BIA Boundary Map

Why Now?

Weston Village is a culturally diverse and community-oriented place and is experiencing change and growth. The construction of a new transit station with revitalized GO track service and connection to the UP Express has contributed new opportunities for the community. In July 2022, the City of Toronto adopted Official Plan Amendments to support minimum density targets and planning for Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) in accordance with the Provincial Growth Plan.

Currently, there are nine major development applications initiated within the BIA area since 2015. With many changes planned across the York South-Weston community and as Weston Village continues to intensify with increasing development, the BIA will play an integral part in not only shaping the growth that is anticipated in the community, but also in retaining and enhancing the vibrancy and vitality of the wider community.



Figure 5 Development Notice at 156 Weston Road

Why did the BIA initiate the creation of Strategic Plan?

Weston Village is a diverse place with a rich cultural heritage. As the area has continuously experienced changes, various reports and studies have been conducted that have focused on supporting the built and retail environment. These reports have identified similar strengths and assets possessed by the community as well as persistent challenges facing Weston Village.

The BIA board intends to adopt a strategic plan that includes detailed actions and implementation strategies to address the unique opportunities for improvement that exist in Weston Village, leveraging assets and mapping a path to address challenges overtime with available resources.

In 2021, the Weston Village BIA finalized a Streetscape Master Plan that provides direction on enhancing the vitality of the streetscape and improving the public realm along Weston Road. The Streetscape Master Plan is an important step to guiding future change within the BIA area, attempting to coordinate City and BIA initiatives with new private development towards a common objective in the public realm.

Building from the momentum of the Streetscape Master Plan, the strategic plan will provide concrete short, mid, and long-term goals coordinating all actions of the BIA. This strategic plan includes detailed actions that respond to challenges, leverage assets and advance the mission and vision of the BIA.

How To Use This Report

This document outlines the vision of the Weston Village BIA and is structured in a way to help readers understand the future goals and actions required to be undertaken by the BIA in reaching those goals. There are many ways to read this plan. It is meant for the BIA staff and board, for BIA members, and the wider community of Weston Village. The document will be a tool to help guide the BIA Board and is meant to be accessible to BIA members including business owners and landowners. This strategic plan is also prepared to inform the wider community including residents in Weston Village and prospective investors and businesses looking to understand future opportunities available across the community.

In crafting the roadmap to achieving a future vision, the strategic plan identifies the current state and presents the steps required to achieve that future vision.

This document is comprised of several sections:

- **Plan Creation**
The method used in the study and creation of this strategic plan including background review, community and stakeholder engagement and Board-led visioning and action planning.
- **Current Landscape**
Including an analysis of the current state of the WV BIA and the Weston Village Community. This section includes an analysis of Strengths, Opportunities and Aspirations
- **BIA Mission, Vision and Strategic Directions**
Articulating the desired goals and vision for the future of Weston Village
- **Implementation Plan**
Providing concrete actions towards achieving the desired future objectives.
- **Evaluation**

Providing a recommended evaluation approach to track and assess progress made on the strategic directions.

- **Recommendations for Success**
Recommendations that GPA has identified in order to best implement the strategic plan.

The strategic plan identifies opportunities to



Figure 6 Public Realm along Weston Road



Figure 7 Weston Village Farmer's Market

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Plan Creation

How Was The Strategic Plan Created?

The creation of the strategic plan was completed in two phases (see Figure 8). The objective of the first phase was to analyze existing conditions, community assets, and challenges through a background review and an inclusive and creative community engagement programme. A needs assessment (see appendix A) was conducted and reviewed by the Weston Village BIA board following phase 1.

The needs assessment included and analysis of previous reports and studies of Weston Village, the current challenges and opportunities facing Weston, and it identified potential future states desired by the community. The objective of the second phase was to create strategic objectives and a detailed action plan that will realize the objectives.

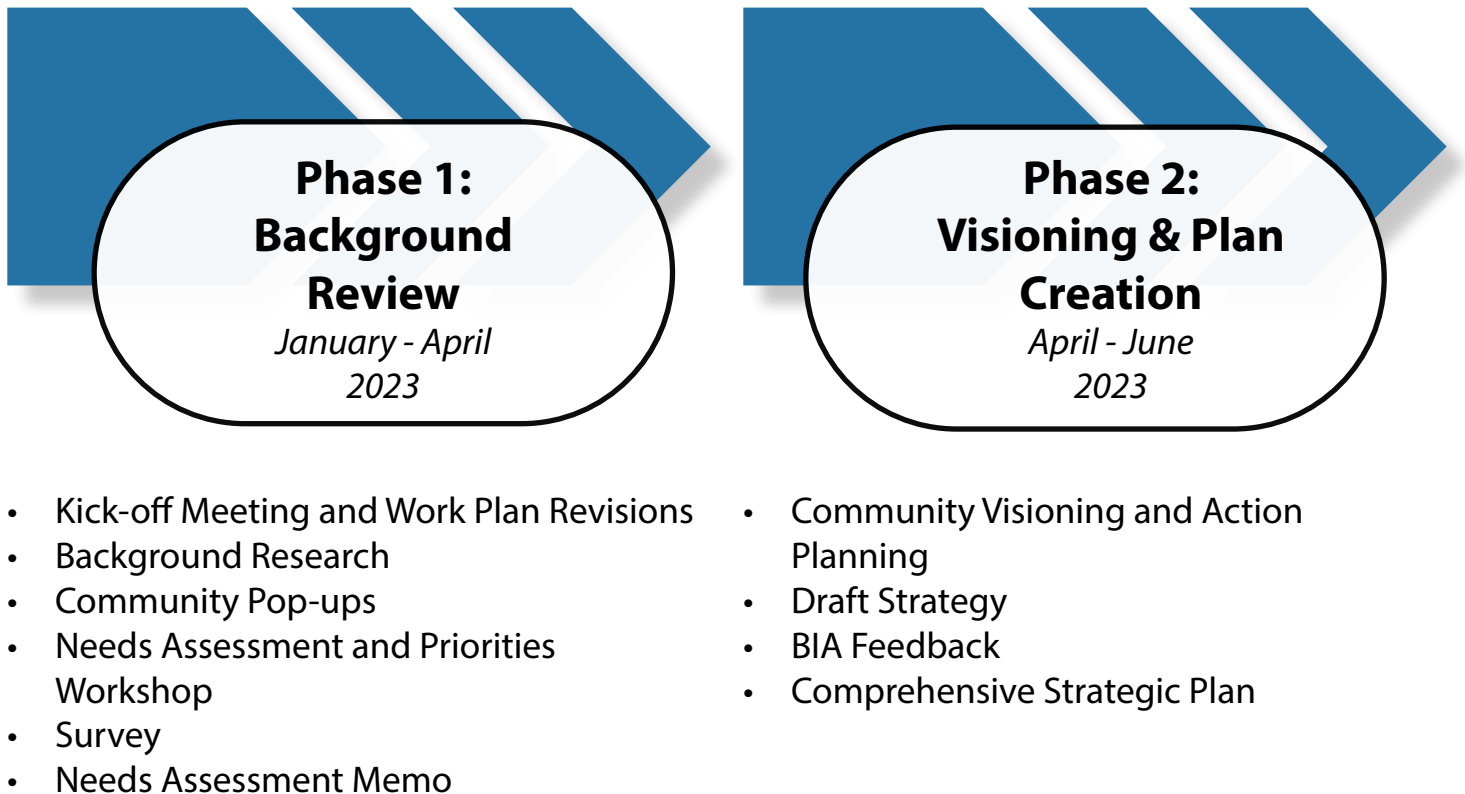


Figure 8 Strategic Planning Process Timeline

How Did We Engage The Community?

The creation of the of the strategic plan was directly informed by the input of stakeholders including BIA staff, business owners, BIA board members, existing community associations, and the wider Weston Village community. GPA coordinated a robust and successful engagement program that consisted of six different engagement activities.

- Intercept Interviews
- Community Pop-up at Weston Library
- BIA Member Drop-In
- BIA Member Focus Group
- Meetings with Weston Village Residents Association & Weston Village Historical Society
- Online Survey

Over **70 people** and **2 community** associations participated. The engagement activities were intended to reach a variety of people who live, work and play in Weston Village. Stakeholders were asked to consider key priorities for the BIA, to share their thoughts on the retail and business identity in the neighbourhood, and to identify strengths, opportunities, and aspirations for Weston Village.


The local expertise and lived experience of those within the community are integral to the successful creation of an actionable strategic plan. The engagement program was designed to generate interest within the community, with the broader goal of fostering long-term involvement and ownership of initiatives to sustain a successful local economic environment in Weston Village.



"I want to enjoy public space and feel safe doing so."



"I would like to see more entertainment options along Weston Road."



"I like that we have a lot of 'mom and pop' type small businesses."

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Current Landscape

Strengths

Farmers Market

The Weston Village Farmers Market is a highly anticipated and well-frequented event that the BIA hosts each summer. Many community members are familiar with the event and the role that the BIA plays in coordinating the market. The Farmers Market has been a recurring event in Weston Village for more than 40 years.



Figure 9 Aerial view of the Weston Village Farmer's Market

GO/UP Train Station

Metrolinx's Weston station services both the GO Transit Kitchener Line and the Union to Pearson (UP) express. The UP service runs as frequently as every 15 minutes during weekdays, with service to both downtown Toronto and Pearson International Airport. As previously mentioned, the station has been identified as a MTSA through Official Plan Amendments and will be the impetus for intensification and significant development within Weston Village near the station. The location of the station within the BIA, along the main retail corridor in Weston provides opportunities to bring more customers and potential new retailers to the area on frequent regional and rapid transit service. Additionally, the Metrolinx parking lot is centrally located space that can be animated through pop-ups and/or events.



Figure 10 Weston Village GO/UP Station

Humberstone Walls

The Humberstone Walls are a unique heritage asset in the community. Made of brown stilt stones from the Humber River, these walls were constructed in the early-mid twentieth century and are similar to river stone walls found in Devon and Somerset in the United Kingdom. Many of these walls were built by Master stone Mason, James Gilbert Grove and Weston resident Charlie Gillis. The Humberstone Walls provide a unique historical character to the area that is unique to Weston Village and reflect a history of connection to the Humber River, pride in workmanship, and community improvement. The preservation of these walls provides an opportunity to share what is unique to Weston with other communities and to continue to build a sense of pride among those that are already a part of the Weston Community.



Figure 11 Humberstone Walls

Weston Library (Carnegie Library)

Like the Humberstone walls, the Weston Library is an exceptional heritage asset within Weston Village. The Weston Library is one of ten Carnegie Libraries built in the early 20th century within the City of Toronto. It is an Arts and Crafts style library with Art Nouveau mosaic panels and stained-glass windows. Not only is the Library a remarkable heritage asset, it is a well-used community space and Library today. The Library is located on the western edges of the BIA Boundary and is an active community organization that can promote and support local initiatives and



Figure 12 Weston Library

“Home of the Bicycle”

Weston Village has long been connected to the bicycle, and is often referred to as the “Home of the Bicycle”. The CCM factory manufactured bikes in the area until 1983. Today images of bicycles can be found through the community on murals and signs. The bicycle is also included on the BIA logo. The strong connection between cycling and Weston Village is seen as a strength by community members and is an asset that can be leveraged to support revitalization initiatives.



Figure 13 Bike Racks at Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue

Walkability

While there are improvements to the pedestrian experience that can be made in Weston Village, daily needs are within walking distance along the main commercial corridor on Weston Road. The neighbourhood has many features of a complete community including a mix of jobs, local services, a full range of housing, community infrastructure and open spaces. The neighbourhood is also within walking distance of local and regional transit. The close proximity of daily needs along the main commercial corridor, and the main street-built environment can support revitalization initiatives.



Figure 14- 15 Pedestrian areas in Weston Village

Access to the Humber River Recreational Trail

There are access points to the Humber River Recreational Trails in close proximity to the main commercial corridor along Weston Road. Studies like the City-initiated “Mid-Humber Gap Environmental Assessment”, will support improvements to the recreational trail infrastructure in Weston Village. There is an opportunity to leverage the work that is being done to eliminate the “Humber gap” and think strategically about how to encourage those using the recreational trail to visit and frequent the BIA.



Figure 16-17 Humber River Recreational Trail

Opportunities

Safety

Some community members, as part of the consultation programme for this strategic plan, expressed feeling unsafe in the neighbourhood after 8:00pm. Others indicated that the area is perceived negatively and is viewed as unsafe by new families who move into the area and by those outside of the community. There was a desire from both community members and BIA stakeholders to change this perception.

Familiarity and Visibility of the BIA

Those who are involved with the WVBIA had a good understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a BIA. However, the community at large was not familiar with the work or the role of the BIA, with the notable exception of the Farmers Market which is viewed fondly community members. BIA stakeholders stated that improving the identity and visibility of the BIA should be a priority.

Communication with Staff at the City of Toronto

Given the amount of anticipated development in the area, improving communication and coordination with the City's Planning and Economic Development Departments are important. A process needs to be established with the City where they circulate development applications to the BIA, and the BIA is given the opportunity to submit feedback, and suggest opportunities for coordinating

improvement with development.

Business Diversity

There was agreement among community members and BIA stakeholders that improvement in the BIA would mean greater diversity of business and retail options in the area. People were particularly eager to have entertainment options, restaurants, cafés, childcare centres, bike shops, shoe stores, bars, artisanal shops, and a grocery stores along Weston Road.

Involvement in the BIA

There is a sense that business and landowners within the BIA are not engaged in the work that the BIA is doing. There is a desire to have more BIA members involved in various BIA initiatives, as well, share their feedback with the BIA more consistently. Weston Village will undergo significant changes as the area is expecting a lot of new development. The input and collective efforts of BIA members will be important to ensure that the BIA's vision for the future of Weston Village is shared with developers, City Planning, and new residents.

Aspirations

Increased Activity in the BIA

Businesses in the BIA would like to see increased foot traffic and activity in their stores. There is a desire to, first and foremost, have local residents do more of their shopping along the main commercial corridor on Weston Road. Additionally, there is a desire to bring new customers to the area and meet the needs of the residents who will be moving into the new developments.

Collaborative Relationship with City of Toronto

In addition to establishing a process to have development applications circulated to the BIA, there is also a desire to work with the City to implement the Streetscape Master Plan, as well, to plan a community safety audit and walk. The BIA can work with the Councillor's office to identify City departments and specific staff members who can help advance BIA projects and initiatives.

Animation of Public Space, Greening, and Beautification Initiatives

People want to see sidewalks free of litter, more street furniture, more greenery, improved lighting, and animated public areas. The BIA has invested in the creation of a thorough and robust Streetscape Master Plan. The plan includes objectives and initiatives that can be implemented to enhance and bring more vitality to the public realm.

Partnerships with Active Community Associations

The BIA is currently connected with the resident's association and the historical association within Weston. There is an opportunity and desire to explore and expand collaboration with these groups in order to coordinate on shared goals, and community wide events and programs.

Youth focused

Youth in the area are excited to shop, work, gather, and play in Weston Village. The BIA is interested in involving youth in the decision-making process and engaging with them to find out what they want to see more of in the community.



Figure 18 New BIA Banners along Weston Road

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Weston Farmers Market
 JUNE - OCTOBER
 EVERY SATURDAYS 8am-1pm
 34 John St - Artscape Weston Common



Strategic Directions

BIA Mission & Vision

This strategic plan has been designed with the understanding that improvement to the business/retail community in Weston Village requires a holistic approach that considers community improvement at a broad scale.

The BIA Board has adopted a mission and vision. The mission and vision are the north star that this strategic plan aims to work towards.

GPA has consolidated the findings from the background review, community engagement, and visioning and action planning session into seven strategic directions.

The strategic directions are actions that can be taken to advance the BIA's mission and vision. They are described in detail in the proceeding section.

The strategic directions reinforce one another, and prioritize building capacity within the local community, tailoring improvements to reflect the daily needs of residents who are currently located within Weston. The strategic directions build off of and leverage the strengths and unique character of Weston Village.



Mission

"To promote Weston Village as a vibrant neighbourhood in Toronto with a strong local economy and a diverse retail landscape."



Vision

"To see WVBIA revitalized as a community focal point in which businesses thrive; residents live, work, and play; and visitors feel welcome and safe."

Strategic Directions



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Implementation Plan


How To Put This Plan Into Action

Our team has provided details on how to implement each strategic direction. Each strategic direction includes the following:


Responsibility. Based on the current sub-committee structure of the Weston Village Board we have assigned a sub-committee chair to each strategic direction. The person responsible for each strategic direction is not necessarily responsible for all of the work associated with each direction. Rather, they are responsible for leading the work plan, delegating tasks, and monitoring progress made on each of the actions.

Actions to Consider. For each strategic direction there are somewhere between one and four actions that can be considered by the Board. The actions vary in terms of how long they may take and the capacity and resources required.

Time Frame. Each action has been assigned one, two or three chevrons to illustrate how long the implementation of an action may take.

 = *Quick Win*

This is a short-term action that can be completed within the first year.

 = *Medium Term*

This is an action that can be completed within 2-3 years.

 = *Long Term*

This is an action that can be completed within 3-4 years and/or requires significant contribution from parties outside of the Weston Village BIA and may therefore be dependant on external commitments (i.e., City of Toronto City Planning).

Capacity. Each action has been assigned one, two or three chevrons to illustrate the capacity (effort) and/or resources required to implement an action.



Little to no additional resources or capacity required.



Some additional resources and capacity required.



Significant resources and capacity required. Requires additional funding and staff.

Reward. Each action has been assigned one, two or three chevrons to illustrate indicating how great the reward may be within a 4-year period.



Low reward within a 4-year period



Some reward within a 4-year period



High reward within a 4-year period

Strategic Direction #1 - Improve the visibility of the BIA among Business Owners and expand Business Owner Engagement in the BIA.



Responsibility: BIA Staff with support from Board of Directors

Action 1.1 - Leverage relationships and familiarity of BIA Coordinator to continue to bring more awareness to the work of the BIA in the community.



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

This action will require consistent efforts from BIA staff to visit and connect with business and landowners, particularly ones where it more challenging to talk to the business owner. Option 1: The Board of Directors can support this initiative by each identifying 10-15 businesses they can connect with. Option 2: BIA Board and Staff can work collaboratively with BIA members to create a BIA Business Champions volunteer program. This would involve BIA Business owners liaising with other Business owners about the BIA's role in the community and how the BIA can support them. Both of these options are a time intensive action and will require significant investment of staff hours and Board time to continuously follow-up with both responsive and unresponsive business and land owners.

Action 1.2 - Develop an information sheet in multiple languages



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

This action can be completed fairly quickly, using information that the BIA has developed already (“What does a BIA do” and “Whose Job is it documents”). Additional information will need to be created on the advantages of a BIA, how the BIA can support local businesses, and how a business or landowners could get involved with the BIA. The information sheet should be one page and easy understand. This action requires a printing budget as well as funds or personnel for translation services. An information sheet can be created within 1 year and can be used to support the first action.

Action 1.3 - Create and implement visibility initiatives (i.e., storefront window stickers, rotating street banners, and “Meet your BIA Board Members” Social Media Campaign.)



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

This action will require various materials to be created that can be posted throughout the community, including storefront window stickers, rotating banners that can be hung along the main retail corridor, and/or a “Meet your BIA Board Members” social media campaign. As of June 2023, the BIA recently installed street banners along Weston Road promoting the BIA. Budget will be required to create the materials for the visibility initiatives. Ongoing effort and resource will be required to initiate new or alter current visibility initiatives. The installation and implementation of these initiatives will also require additional personnel and budget capacity over time. An information sheet can be created within 1 year and can be used to support the first action.

Next Steps:

- ☑ Create list of corresponding businesses and landowners, and assign a BIA staff, Board member, or Volunteer BIA member to facilitate outreach. The person will be responsible for engaging the BIA members they have been assigned.
- ☑ Create a schedule for conducting outreach with assigned BIA members. Consistent efforts should be made to connect with assigned BIA members on an on-going basis.
- ☑ Develop content for an information sheet. Make a list that includes:
 - Advantages of being a part of a BIA
 - How the BIA supports it's members
 - How to get involved with your local BIA
- ☑ Create a visually appealing, easy to read information sheet. Translate the information sheet into multiple languages that reflect the different languages spoken within the community.
- ☑ Create initiatives and materials where the BIA logo is visible and/or the BIA is mentioned or attributed to something. This could include stickers that can be placed on storefront windows, Banners along the Main Street, and/or "Meet your BIA Board Members and Staff" social media initiatives.
- ☑ Explore opportunities for partnership or sponsorship where the BIA name and brand will be visible, and language such as "This event/program/initiative was supported by your local BIA", is used.

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Strategic Direction #2 - Implement Streetscape Master Plan.



Responsibility: Streetscape Sub-Committee Chair

Action 2.1 - Advocate for City Planning to adopt and give status to the BIA's Streetscape Master Plan



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

The BIA Board will need to advocate for City Planning and the City Councillor at the City of Toronto to update the planning policy framework for Weston Village. This update should then reflect recent works, like the BIA Streetscape Master Plan (SMP). The Councillor and their office can be asked to initiate this process. If the Streetscape Master Plan is not formally adopted or incorporated by the City, there is nothing requiring the plan to be implemented either as part of City works or as part of new developments in the area. Given the amount of work that is required by other parties outside of the BIA to implement this action, a significant amount of time will be required on the part of the BIA to advocate and follow-up with the external stakeholders. The ultimate objective is to get City Council to adopt the SMP as a policy framework for improving the public realm and incorporating improvements into the City's capital budget.

Action 2.2 - Pursue active and programmable third spaces as part of streetscape improvement in Weston Village. Incorporate the youth perspective (see strategic direction #4) in the implementation.



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

Once a mechanism for implementing the Streetscape Master plan is implemented, the BIA can identify public spaces that can be used for programming or active uses. Programs and activities should occur in these spaces in order to further animate the main commercial corridor along Weston Road.

Through the engagement process for this plan, residents stated that they preferred the Metrolinx parking lot as a location for the Farmer's Market. Understanding that the BIA has initiated conversations with Metrolinx on several occasions to explore re-locating the Farmers Market back to the parking lot, the BIA can consider reaching out to different department of Metrolinx or re-connecting with the MPP's office to inquire about using the parking lot for events and initiatives. More details are provided in the **Next Steps** section.

This action requires the adoption of the Streetscape Master Plan by the City, engaging with local youth, and/or connecting landowners to see if programming can occur. Additional financial capacity will be required in order to facilitate the active uses in these third spaces. Some of these can be explained as temporary demonstration projects.

Action 2.3 - Establish a procedure with the City to have the Master Plan shared with Developers and to have City Planning circulate all Development applications to the BIA



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

This action requires the BIA and City Planning to agree on a procedure to have the Streetscape Master Plan shared with developers in Weston Village until the City is able to formally adopt the Streetscape Master Plan. The BIA should request that all development applications within the BIA boundary are circulated to the BIA, and that the BIA is given the opportunity to provide comment. The BIA should also identify areas of the Master Plan that they want to highlight and advocate with developers. These actions are not resource intensive and only require some staff time to advocate and coordinate with City Planning staff. Time for on-going review and comment will also be required in the medium and long term.

Action 2.4 - Incorporate Master Plan into Capital Works Budget



Timeframe



Capacity



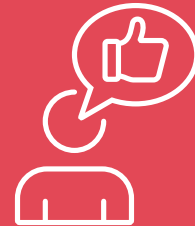
Reward

As part of the adoption process, the BIA can advocate for the City to include and incorporate relevant aspects of the Streetscape Master Plan into the Capital Works budget. Like other actions in this section, this action requires BIA personnel to advocate and coordinate with City Planning and City Councillor over a long period of time. This entails a substantial amount of staff and Board member hours in the long term.

Next Steps:

- ☑ Schedule a meeting with the Councillor and/or City Planning to discuss a City Planning policy update to the area that reflects recent works like the Streetscape Master Plan. The Planning Manager for the district the BIA is in can be contacted to schedule an initial meeting. Ultimately, the goal would be to have City Council adopt the plan.
- ☑ Connect with City Planning and schedule a meeting to determine a process for the circulation of the Streetscape Master Plan to developers, and a process to have development applications circulated to the BIA for comment.
- ☑ BIA Streetscape sub-committee to conduct an in-depth review of the Streetscape Master Plan and take inventory of what has been completed, what has been initiated, and what the main priorities are.
- ☑ BIA Board to create a letter template that can be used to provide comment on development applications.
- ☑ Identify potential public spaces within the BIA boundary that can be used for active and programmable uses.
- ☑ Connect with different groups within Weston Village including youth to discuss streetscape improvements to third spaces that will encourage more active uses of those sites.

Strategic Direction #3 - Publicize and promote a positive image of Weston in the local community and with other communities.



Responsibility: Marketing Sub-Committee Chair

Action 3.1 - Leverage physical and historical assets and community strengths to market those outside of Weston Village



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

The Board shared a desire to bring more people from other communities to Weston Village. The rich history and unique physical attributes should be promoted widely and creatively across the City. Specific marketing approaches and initiatives can be expanded upon in a media strategy, however, some ideas include advocating for the City of Toronto's annual Jane's walk to happen in Weston Village, or networking to see what opportunities there may be to have a Cycling Museum in Weston. Some marketing initiatives might require little additional resource or capacity, while others, such as a Cycling Museum, would require significant time and resource commitment.

Action 3.2 - Create a Media Strategy



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

A media strategy should be developed in order to improve relationships with local media and advance positive storytelling about and in the community. The BIA should be the point of contact when something negative or positive happens in the community. In the case of negative coverage, a media strategy can be beneficial in providing language to frame the issue. As part of this strategic work, the BIA can create a directory of editors, create letter templates, and set up a Google alert to monitor coverage in the area. A media strategy can also identify marketing tools and strategies that can be enacted to promote a more positive image of Weston Village; specifically, when there are BIA events, programs or initiatives in the area. Creative and unconventional tools could be considered such as influencer marketing. The creation of a marketing strategy or action plan, while time intensive, can be created within one year's time. Once created, the plan can be referred to when there is negative coverage, or when there are positive things happening in the community that the BIA wants to highlight. Monitoring of Media Coverage will require a small proportion of staff time on a weekly basis. Significant financial capacity will be required to implement some of the marketing tools, including paid advertising, influencer marketing, or printed marketing materials.

Action 3.3 - Partner with Community Groups for Events, Initiatives and Programs



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

In an effort to create and build off current BIA initiatives, programs and events, the BIA should identify opportunities to collaborate with other local groups. Building and expanding relationships, and showcasing the positive aspects of Weston Village will contribute to a more positive image of the community over time. This action requires some time spent coordinating with other groups. Once collaboration opportunities are identified and confirmed, the amount of resources required will depend on the nature of the collaboration. Additional staff capacity would allow for more collaboration opportunities and therefore may want to be considered by the BIA.

Action 3.4 - Promote City funded programs to improve storefronts



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

The BIA can create information campaigns and initiatives to bring more awareness to City funded storefront improvement programs. The BIA can work with the City to host information sessions, or sessions to help storeowners apply to the grant programs. BIA members would be invited to the BIA office and would be given support and assistance in applying for City programs. The BIA can consider other incentives to encourage BIA members to apply to City improvement funds. These types of events require staff capacity to plan and coordinate the event. Some financial resources may be required to promote the event as well as for participation incentives.

Of note, some of the City's grant programs are not sufficient in terms of the levels of support they provide to business owners. The BIA can advocate with the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) to have improvements made to the City's grant program. The WV BIA will need to identify what specifically they would like to see changed.

Action 3.5 - Invite and host other organizations and BIAs to learn about best practices and projects from other neighbourhoods and communities



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

The BIA can do outreach with other local BIAs, other BIAs in the province, and other organizations to learn how they have successfully addressed similar challenges in their communities. Additionally, the BIA should consider how TABIA and the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA) can specifically support the advancement of the BIA's strategic plan. This action item does not require a significant amount of financial resources. Some staff and Board hours would be required to connect with other organizations and to facilitate meetings.

Next Steps:

- ☑ Create a Media Strategy with a list of local editors, messaging, and letter templates.
- ☑ Set-up a Google Alert for the area and designate someone to monitor media coverage of the area.
- ☑ Designate BIA spokespeople.
- ☑ Schedule meetings with active community associations, such as the resident’s association and historical society, and identify one or two community events that could benefit from a partnership.
- ☑ Invite various forms of media to the Farmers Market and Winterfest.
- ☑ Reach out to the City of Toronto Economic Development Department and inquire about hosting an “application blitz”. Ask if they City can provide a support person at an event to answer questions about the application process.
- ☑ Research other BIAs and their initiatives and connect with them to see if there are opportunities to learn from one another .
- ☑ Brainstorm platforms to market the unique characteristics and strengths of the community with those who not do yet frequent Weston Village.

Case Example

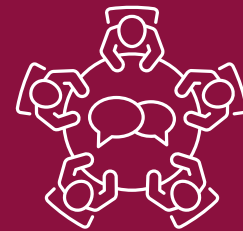
Downtown Sudbury BIA Welcoming Streets Pilot Program

The Downtown Sudbury BIA launched a Welcoming Street Pilot Program in April 2023. The program will hire two mental health support workers to respond to mental health and addiction related calls instead of the Police, within the BIA’s boundary. The program cost the Downtown Sudbury BIA \$250,000. While the program does not address the root causes of addiction and mental health challenges, the program provides businesses an additional resource in the community to support and provide care to those in crisis. Similar programs exist in Guelph and Brampton.



Welcoming Streets is an initiative that incorporates and employs professional outreach workers dedicated to the downtown core. They work to build and maintain relationships with businesses, respond to concerns while supporting some of our communities most vulnerable individuals at the same time.

Strategic Direction #4 - Include and Engage Youth in Community Decision-Making



Responsibility: Events Sub-Committee Chair

Action 4.1 - Champion a youth leadership role in the community (i.e., advisory committee, Weston Youth Mayor)



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

The BIA Board can decide to create, promote and champion youth leadership opportunities in Weston Village. The BIA can leverage relationships that Board Members already have with youth, youth organizations, and the local high school. For the purposes of this strategic plan, youth refers to those between the ages of 14-18. This can be flexible should the BIA want to expand this age in order to include more youth, or be eligible for a particular funding opportunity. The creation of a youth leadership opportunity will require staff and board time to create and coordinate. Some additional budget may need to be made available to support the delivery of this initiative.

Action 4.2 - Collaborate with youth to plan events and initiatives



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

Once youth are engaged and connected with the BIA, they can be included in decision making on BIA matters as well as consulted on different programs or events that could encourage more youth participation in the BIA, and more youth friendly spaces within the BIA. This action may require some additional budget to support the implementation of the ideas that youth bring forward.

Next Steps:

- Research different types of youth leadership roles that may be applicable to the Weston Village BIA.
- Decide on the kind of youth opportunity that the Board would like to create.
- Review the Board of Director policies and handbook and consider incorporating the BIA youth leadership opportunity into the Board's operating document and policies.
- Reach out to youth, and those that work with youth to hear what they want from a leadership opportunity from the BIA.
- Create a program curriculum for the youth leadership opportunity and implement it. The BIA can consider how they will recruit youth, what the youth roles are, what the time commitment is from youth, who on the BIA Board or staff will be responsible for the day-to-day coordination of the program, and what the available budget is to facilitate the program.
- Host and/or sponsor a Youth Forum.

Strategic Direction #5 - Make Weston Village an inviting and memorable community where people feel comfortable and have a sense of belonging.



Responsibility: Streetscape Sub-Committee Chair

Action 5.1 - Host a Community Safety Audit



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

The BIA has completed a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design audit with Toronto Police Services, Division 12. To expand on this work and involve the community at a large scale, the BIA should initiate a community safety audit in collaboration with the Councillor's office and City of Toronto staff. This should be a community led walk that involves multiple City divisions. Community members and business owners alike should be encouraged to participate. Focus should be placed on engaging with women and equity-deserving communities including those from the BIPOC community and the LGBT2QIA+ community. Minimal additional budget or resources will need to be allocated to this event. This action will require some staff and BIA Board hours in order to coordinate and advertise the walk.

Action 5.2 - Explore Safety Communication Tools



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

The BIA can consider using a communication tool that business owners can opt into to receive information and updates pertaining to community safety . This could include a Facebook group, newsletters, or a Toronto Police Services update. This is not intended to be a negative space to discuss problems with people or behaviours, but to provide useful information to business owners about preventing crime in the area and promoting safety for everybody. This action will require some staff and BIA Board hours in order to set-up and maintain a communication tool/ platform.

Next Steps:

- Schedule a meeting with the Councillors Office and Manager, Social Development, Finance & Administration to discuss hosting a community safety audit and walk.
- Review City instructions for conducting a community safety audit [here](#).
- Explore different community safety communication tools and choose one to implement.

Case Example

The Junction BIA Toronto Police Weekly Update

The Junction BIA website has a webpage titled "Toronto Police Weekly Update". On this page they post the Toronto Police Services BIA updates, a link to the Toronto Police Services Facebook group for business owners, and crime prevention quick tips. This information can be found on The Junction BIA [website](#) under "member services".

May 26, 2023 • Member Resources

Toronto Police Weekly Update

May 17th, 2023

The following are the reported incidents in the respective BIA's:

College West	1 X Robbery
Bloor West Village	8 X Theft Under (6 from LCBO), 1 Incident, 1 B&E
The Junction	4 X Theft Under (3 from LCBO), 1 X Fraud Under
Bloordale Village	1 X B&E

Any questions or concerns please reach out to PC Jan Barr.

PC Jan Barr #9785
CPO/CRO
11 Division
Toronto Police Service
Phone: (416)-808-1108
Email: Janet.Barr@torontopolice.on.ca

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Strategic Direction #6 - Attract a diversity of businesses to create a rich business landscape in Weston Village.



Responsibility: Capacity Development Sub-Committee Chair

Action 6.1 - Perform a market analysis and assessment.



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

The BIA may establish and maintain a market analysis to be available to members as well as prospective investors and businesses seeking to locate within the Weston Village BIA area.

Such Commercial Market Assessments include population and traffic counts as well as basic demographic and commercial information including the population within regular access to the BIA area, available square footage of retail and commercial space and the number of businesses and business growth within the BIA.

Regular retail and commercial listings may be obtained from real estate brokers operating within the neighbourhood. Brokerages may also be able to provide preliminary commercial market information to promote these listings. After collection, this data should be maintained. This action requires additional staff hours or the retention of a consultant to perform the analysis.

Action 6.2 - Create a strategy to attract retail and business



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

Further collaboration with City of Toronto Economic Development, landowners and local real estate brokers may lead to the opportunity to coordinate a retail and commercial business strategy focused on promoting commercial real estate leasing and development opportunities within the community and attracting new tenants to available spaces.

Opportunities for this strategy include the creation of a front desk service for real estate brokers and prospective businesses, providing information about the community including a database of available listings and developable commercial property within the BIA area. The BIA can consider posting this information on their website and creating something similar to the Junction BIA with a "Space Wanted" and "Space Available" section on the webpage. The BIA may also facilitate introductions to City of Toronto division including Planning, Building Services and Transportation Services to address common issues and concerns faced by prospective businesses looking to relocate in Weston Village. The action requires additional capacity for on-going collaboration with municipal or different real estate groups.

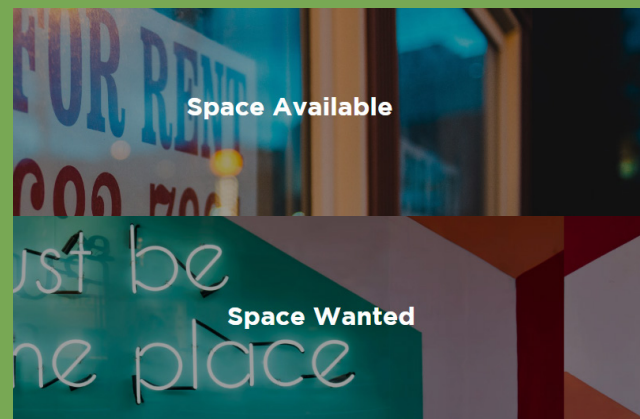
Next Steps:

- ☑ BIA to internally perform market analysis or hire an outside consultant to perform the analysis.
- ☑ Identify and connect with contacts at the City of Toronto and local real estate brokers to collaborate on a strategy.
- ☑ Ask landowners and real estate brokers about the creation of a database of available listings. Share on the WVBIA webpage.

Case Example

Commercial Real Estate in The Junction BIA

The Junction BIA website has a menu option titled "Real Estate". Under this tab, anyone can view what spaces are available and what spaces are wanted within the BIA boundary. Those looking to buy or rent commercial space, and/or those with commercial space for sale or for rent can post a listing.



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Strategic Direction #7 - Increase Financial Capacity of BIA.



Responsibility: Capacity Development Sub-Committee Chair

Action 7.1 - Explore potential BIA Boundary expansions.



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

The BIA recently expanded their boundary. Future expansions can be explored to assess impacts on the BIA's financial capacity. The City of Toronto has a formal process by which a BIA can expand its boundaries. The BIA would need to work with the City and followed their detailed process. Exploring and evaluating future expansions can be performed existing BIA staff members.

Action 7.2 - Track grants and funding pools that are currently being accessed by the BIA.



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

Create a database of grants that have previously been used or are currently being used. Continue to monitor the reapplication to these grants, if appropriate. This task can be completed without significant additional resources. This action can be completed by a BIA staff person. Some staff hours would be required to create the database, and a few hours on a monthly basis would be required to monitor and update the database. Explore grants to hire students who could in turn help with some of the outreach and media related tasks.

Action 7.3 - Identify new grant and funding opportunities and explore opportunities for partnership with other local community groups.



Timeframe



Capacity



Reward

The grants and funding database can be expanded by researching additional funding and grant opportunities that the BIA may be eligible for, or interested in, pursuing. Identify and monitor the application cycle for upcoming grants that the BIA may be interested in applying for, and create a plan to apply when relevant. The BIA can explore opportunities to partner with other organizations and assess opportunities to partner on a funding application. Some additional capacity is required to have a staff person dedicate time to creating and maintaining the database.

Next Steps:

- ☑ Convene a Board meeting to discuss and review the boundary expansion process.
- ☑ Compile a list of all of the previous funding and grant programs that the BIA has used.
- ☑ Create a matrix in excel or use another tool/format to keep detailed information on previous grant or funding applications.
 - Name of grant / funding program
 - Details / Description
 - Eligibility Requirements
 - Application Requirements
 - Date(s) applied
 - Successful (Y/N)
 - Amount
 - Reoccurring or One Time
 - BIA Use
- ☑ Research different funding agencies and assess different grant opportunities that may be applicable to the BIA's current or future work. Consider organizations such as the Ontario Trillium Foundation, Toronto Foundation, Canada Summer Jobs, 880 Cities, and TD Ready Commitment fund.

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Evaluation

Evaluation Approach

A strategic plan is a tool that can be used to check-in and see if the BIA’s work is aligned with its strategic goals. Additionally, it can be used to ensure accountability and transparency in decision-making and annual budgeting. Evaluating the strategic plan is necessary to assess progress made on the organization’s strategic directions.



Figure 19 Evaluation Approach Timeline

Outcome Evaluation

Conducting an outcome evaluation at the following intervals is recommended.

- Annual Review – Year 1 and 3
- Strategic Plan Review – Year 4

An outcome evaluation focuses on the effectiveness of an action or program. The primary objective of an outcome evaluation is to assess whether a change has occurred. An outcome evaluation includes:

- What are the outcomes from each action?
- What differences / changes have occurred?
- Which actions have successfully been completed?
- Who has benefitted from a particular action?
- What aspects of an action were successful?
- What aspects of an action were not successful?
- To what extent has the strategic objective been achieved?

An outcome evaluation will provide important information to the BIA on the success of each of the actions, particularly as it relates to the achievement of the strategic objectives. An outcome evaluation is a tool that can be used to take stock of what has been completed successfully, and what still needs to be done. Annual outcome evaluations can be completed as a way to check-in on progress and make any necessary changes to advance the work program. An outcome evaluation at year 4 will be critical for evaluating the success of the strategic plan. Learnings from the evaluation can then be incorporated into the next strategic plan cycle.

Process Evaluation

GPA recommends conducting a process evaluation at the following interval.

- Mid-point Review – Year 2
- Strategic Plan Review – Year 4

A process evaluation assesses how a particular action or program was implemented. This type of evaluation focuses on how an outcome was achieved. A process evaluation includes:

- Which and how many actions were started, are in progress, or completed?
- Who and how many BIA stakeholders benefitted from implemented actions? Did others benefit? Who?
- What resources were required to implement an action?
- What problems were encountered when implementing an action?
- How were problems resolved? What specific interventions were made?

A process evaluation is important to conduct in order to understand how certain actions are being implemented and if the resources and capacity required to continue to work towards a specific goal can be sustained. In some cases, there may be additional resources or capacity that could be used. A process evaluation at year 2 will help the BIA understand any adjustments that will need to be made to their work plan for the second half of the strategic plan. A process evaluation at Year 4 will provide useful information for the next strategic plan.

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Recomendations

Keys to Success

Below are some recommendations that our team has identified in order to best implement the strategic plan.

Communicating with Developers. Developers have a vested interest in creating an attractive environment for business. It is important for the BIA to develop a process for early and ongoing contact with developers throughout the development process. It is important for the BIA to be clear about the ask from developers from the outset. Know the ask!

Meaningful Change Mindset. Holistic community improvement and noticeable changes along the main commercial strip in Weston Village will take time. When evaluating the strategic plan, our team proposes focusing on positive changes. While quick wins are feasible and fairly straightforward, many of the medium and long-term goals require the participation and collaboration of other organizations and associations. Some change may be outside of the BIA's control.

Focus on community improvement that meets the needs of the people already living in Weston Village. The influx of new residents in Weston Village present an exciting revitalization opportunity for Weston Village. To ensure that revitalization does not leave behind or displace those already living, working, and playing in Weston Village, improvements should prioritize the existing Weston Village community. When community improvement focuses on those already in the area, new investment and business will follow.

Report on progress at each Board Meeting. For the next 4 years, sub-committee chairs should present progress updates on the strategic direction that they are responsible for. This is a way to be accountable and take advantage of everyone's experience and ideas.

Connect with professors and course instructors at post-secondary institutions to complete some of the action items. Many post-secondary institutions offer courses where students are required to work on a project with a community partner or organization. Some of the action items, such as the media strategy, could be completed by a group of students as part of their course work.

Additional BIA Staff. Many of the actions in the preceding section require more staff or board member hours. The BIA may want to consider hiring additional full-time staff member(s) or students who can assist in the implementation and monitoring of many of the proposed actions.

Cost-sharing. As identified in the previous recommendation, there is a desire and a need for more full-time staff to implement some aspects of the strategic plan. To create room in the budget for additional hires, the BIA could explore some budget items that could be shared with other organizations in order to create more financial capacity within the organization.

Strengths

What is unique to the Weston Village business / retail community?

- History
Barnwell (Football)
Stonewalls (Heritage)
- Weston Village
Neighbourhood
F&B
Shops
- Streets are great!
- Historical Society
- More bakeries & restos
bike shops
retail - boutiques
small independent grocers
stores
- Anta Clause Parade
- Marina
Go Station

Opportunities

What does improvement look like in Weston Village?

- Trees of Monarchs
gardening club
from Weston
- Prevent:
Feeding of pigeons
Work with City to enforce
"do not feed wildlife"
- Prevent:
Nesting of rats, mostly
caused by feeding of
pigeons.
- Repair:
existing benches
Set aside:
- money for future
repairs
- for clean-ups
- for on a regular and
consistent basis
- Bike Rental
"projects in
Weston"
- Residents
Association
New Year's Eve
"BIA" to
celebrate
- Wettable
mimic
to any spot
to bring fire
extinguisher
- Clean up
streets
- Energy
Festival
- Food Truck
- Equinox
- St. Patrick's Day
- Our heritage stone
Wall Festival
- Outdoor restaurant
Barney
- Form of the
reel is too
small
- More bakeries
& restos
bike shops
retail - boutiques
small independent grocers
stores
- Dream
Dancers
- Things
at Farmers
should be
but better
music.
- Install:
Speed Bumps
Antique stores
Home Decor Store
Health food store
- Beauty:
Parklets by gardens
(work with
association)
- tree window decorating
contests
- More
Variety
Memorial Park
- music nights
- dance/salsa nights
- theatre - acting
- music
- Renovate
Public Library
Weston
- Recreate Farmers
Market to
Memorial
Park

Aspirations

What do you hope Weston looks and feels like 5 years from now?

- more ppl
out walking
early morning
& evenings
- fresh food
concourse
on Weston
"high" street
experience
- Salsa nights
- ballroom nights
- tango nights
- Community Organisation
the Market
- Institutes like
hospital should
be a part of the
community
- Evening
activities
- maybe a
community
night
- Affordable travel
is needed
- Water
Faucet
Bottle
Filling
- Foot traffic
is needed to
be improved
- Bike Lane
open to
the
street

Results

How might the BIA measure success?

- More pedestrian
traffic
- Look to Roccaforte
- African style
- Taste of Weston
Festival with
- food from around
the world
- Pub Fest
- CRAFT STORE
with workshops
- some can
repairs
- sewing
- pottery
- more
- Bike Rental
right on Weston

Appendix A

Needs Assessment Memo

April 11th, 2023

Overview

The Weston Village Business Improvement Area (WVBIA) has initiated the process of creating a five-year strategic plan and has retained Gladki Planning Associates to assist in the creation of this plan. The strategic plan will be action oriented and provide a road-map for the BIA for the next five years. Weston Village is an area that has been recently experiencing some change and growth. The construction of the new transit station with revitalized GO service and connection to the UP Express has contributed to new opportunities for the community. In July 2022 The City of Toronto adopted Official Plan Amendments to support minimum density targets and planning for Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) in accordance with the Growth Plan. Currently, there are approximately eight submitted development applications within the area. As Weston Village begins to intensify and experience increased development, the BIA will be an integral part in shaping the growth that is anticipated in the community.

The strategic plan will offer a complete vision for the BIA, provide an action-oriented process for achieving this vision, and identify specific actions for implementation. The strategic plan will provide direction to the BIA for short-, medium-, and long-term objectives, as well, positively energize Weston with a renewed focus on enhancing the commercial community.

This report will provide a description of the of the background documents that were reviewed, summarize the findings from the engagement activities, and list and describe the proposed strategic directions.

Background Review

Document	Description
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Audit of Weston Road and Lawrence Avenue West (2022)	The report was prepared by Toronto Police Services, 12 Division's CPTED Audit Team. The report highlights safety concerns and issues that have been raised by local residents and business owners, and provides recommendations to address these concerns.
The Weston Village BIA: Streetscape Master Plan (2021)	The Master Plan was prepared by Weston Village BIA in collaboration with the City of Toronto. The report evaluates conditions of the existing streetscape and provides guidance for future development and changes to the streetscape in Weston Village The Master Plan identifies a variety of projects and interventions to occur in the next 5-10 years that will enhance vitality of the streetscape in Weston

Village. The plan specifies potential public realm improvements in the BIA boundary, with details pertaining to responsibility and opportunities for partnership with the City, and community organizations stakeholders.

The Master Plan focuses primarily on enhancing connectivity along the streetscape, landscape revitalization, historical narratives, BIA Branding, and wayfinding.

Weston 2021 Revitalization Strategy – Request for Direction Report

(2012)

This report was prepared for City Council to provide direction to the Tower Renewal Office, City Planning, Social Development, Finance and Administration, and Economic Development and Culture in assessing revitalization opportunities in Weston and Mount Dennis. The report is a summary and update on the work that City divisions have been doing to advance a 2021 revitalization strategy for Weston. The report recommends that Council endorse the revitalization approach and establish an implementation team to coordinate and oversee the implementation of revitalization initiatives in the Weston area.

The work described in the report included a Design Charette and a Technical Assistance Panel (see descriptions below). The strategy report was created as a response to the need to coordinate multiple City initiatives in the area to support the revitalization of the neighbourhood. The revitalization approach described in the report is intended to stimulate development interest and investment in the community.

Weston 2021 Design Charette Report Summary

(2011)

The Charette was a 3-day event hosted by the City of Toronto. The report provides a summary of the Design Charette. The Charette aimed to imagine how the Weston community could grow and thrive in the coming decade. Local stakeholders and the public were invited to share their visions for the future and work collaboratively with those in attendance to transform ideas into short- and long-term objectives. Focus areas were defined and key design directions were established. The Design Charette was part of the revitalization work being conducted by the City of Toronto and intended to eventually inform the Weston 2021 Action Plan.

Weston 2021 ULI Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Report

(2012)

The TAP was another component of the City of Toronto's revitalization work in the Weston Area. The findings from the TAP were intended to inform the Weston 2021 Action Plan. The TAP contemplated two different paths to revitalization based on the short and long terms objectives identified in the Design Charette. The TAP report concludes that the objectives established as part of the Design charette, will require more than major transit initiatives in the area. A series of smaller community initiatives would be critical to the revitalization of the Weston area. The report identifies several

strategies that could be adopted to support the revitalization of Weston.

Weston CAUSE Report

(1985)

The CAUSE report (Community Assist for an Urban Study Effort) summarizes work that was conducted by the Ontario Association of Architects on behalf of the Weston Village BIA to understand opportunities for improvement and revival within Weston Centre. The report was commissioned by the BIA. The report provides a review of the urban conditions in Weston, and provides an exhaustive list of challenges and desires in the community. The report concludes that there are many unique attributes and opportunities for the Weston Village BIA to leverage in order to address some of the while retaining the unique character of the area.

Engagement Summary

Engagement Approach

GPA coordinated a robust engagement program that consisted of five different engagement activities. The engagement activities were intended to reach a variety of stakeholders including BIA staff, Business Owners, BIA Board Members, and existing community associations. GPA views the local expertise and lived experience of those within the community as integral to the successful creation of an actionable strategic plan. The engagement program was designed to generate interest within the community, with the broader goal of fostering long-term involvement and ownership of initiatives to sustain a successful local economic environment in Weston Village.

Engagement opportunities with the community were shared using a variety of communication tools. Notice for the Community Pop-Up event at Weston Library and the online Survey were shared on the BIA's social media platforms as well as included in Councillor Nunziata's e-newsletter. Information regarding the Business Owner drop-in and the Business Owner and BIA Board Focus Group were shared via email using the BIA's Listserv.

Event Summaries

Findings from the intercept interviews are summarized in the following section. This section describes each of the engagement activities.

Intercept Interviews

March 9th, 2023

Members of the GPA project spent team spent an afternoon walking along the WVBIA commercial strip and interviewed community members about the future of Weston Village. Interviewees were asked about what makes the community unique, what improvement looks like in the community, and what their aspirations are for Weston Village.

21 people were interviewed, representing a variety of people who live, work, and play in the community

Community Pop-Up

March 22nd, 2023

An interactive, pop-up event was set-up in the front foyer of Weston Village Library. Community members were asked about their user experience in Weston Village. Participants were asked to identify community assets and challenges, and share what their vision is for the business retail community in Weston Village. The pop-up was also an opportunity to provide information to people on how to further participate in the strategic planning process.

GPA spoke with **12 people** at the pop-up. Participants included members of the community, members of other community associations, and land owners.

Business Owner Drop-In

March 22nd, 2023

To understand the unique perspective of business and landowners in Weston Village, GPA hosted a drop-in event at the BIA office. Business owners and landowners were invited to share ideas pertaining to the strengths and opportunities of the business retail community, key priorities for the BIA, new development in the area, and aspirations for the neighbourhood's retail and business identity.

4 people attended the drop-in.

Business Owner and BIA Board Focus Group

March 23rd, 2023

A virtual focus group was hosted using Zoom to gather feedback from BIA board members, business owners, and landowners who may have been unable to other events. Additionally, the focus group provided an opportunity for participants to share detailed answers, and engage with one another using a format that allows for long-form responses. Focus group participants were asked to share their thoughts on the BIA's strengths, opportunities for improvement, bringing more customers to the area, proposed developments, their vision for the BIA over the next 5 years, and metrics of success.

7 people registered for the event and **5 people** attended. All attendees were BIA Board members.

Targeted Community Meeting

March 2023

The BIA coordinator and BIA Board members identified **2 community associations** that may have a particular interest in the BIA's strategic planning process, Weston Village Residents Association and Weston Village Historical Association. GPA staff spoke with the chair of each association separately and asked questions about past collaborations, areas where there was overlap between the BIA and the respective group, and interest in potential future collaboration.

Survey

March 2023

A feedback form was created using Google Forms to who encourage participation for those who preferred an asynchronous, virtual engagement opportunity. Respondents were asked a total of 16 questions. Specifically, participants were asked about their familiarity with the BIA, future events and programming, what they liked about shopping in the BIA, what was unique to the area, what Weston Village looks and feels like in five years, and areas for improvement.

28 people responded to the survey. The survey was made available to the entire community. Respondents were asked to identify their connection to the BIA. There was a mix of people who owned property in Weston Village, lived in Weston Village, and/or shopped or used services within the BIA boundary. (See Figure 1.1)

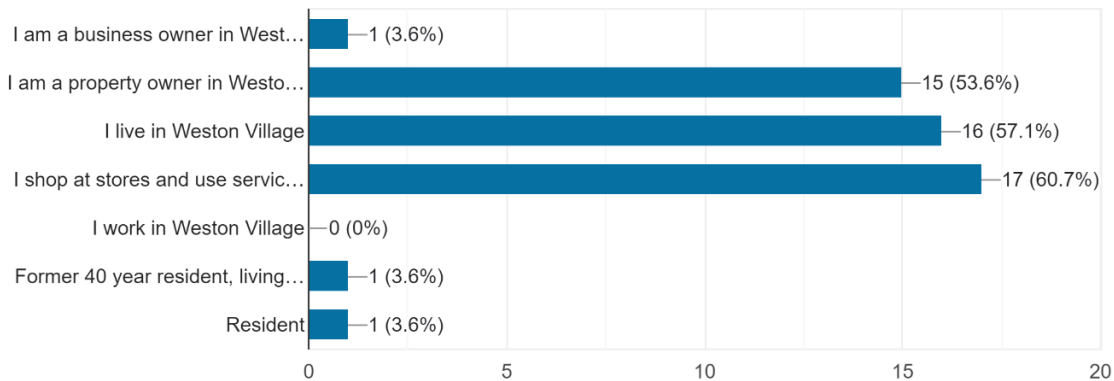


Figure 1.1 Respondent Connection to WVBIA

Main Themes

The key findings from all of the engagement activities are summarized below by theme.

Business Diversity

Generally, there was agreement among community members and BIA stakeholders that improvement in the BIA would mean greater diversity of business and retail options in the area. People were particularly eager to have entertainment options, restaurants, cafés, childcare centres, bike shops, shoe stores, bars, artisanal shops, and a grocery store along the main commercial strip on Weston Road.

Safety

Some people, particularly those GPA spoke to at the Community Pop-up and during the Intercept Interviews, expressed feeling unsafe in the neighbourhood after 8:00pm. People also shared that Weston Village is perceived negatively and is viewed as unsafe outside of the community. There was a desire from both community members and BIA stakeholders to change this perception. Multiple people suggested creating early morning and evening activity to encourage more people to be out on the street early and late in the day. BIA stakeholders shared that there are barriers to businesses in the area equipping their storefronts with crime prevention mechanisms, such as motion sensor lighting, solid construction doors, or protective window coverings.

Familiarity with WVBIA

Those who are involved with the WVBIA had a good understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a BIA. However, the community at large was not familiar with the work or the role of the BIA, with the exception of the Farmers Market. BIA stakeholders stated that improving the identity and visibility of the BIA should be a priority.

Leveraging Strengths

Both community members and BIA stakeholders consistently identified the following as the strengths of Weston Village: GO/UP Train Station, history of Weston Village, access to the Humber River, bike moniker, walkability, and active neighbourhood groups and associations. Respondents indicated that the BIA strategic priorities and efforts should leverage and take advantage of these strengths in order to improve the commercial community in Weston Village and enhance the BIA's identity. Some notable suggestions include:

- working closely with the City of Toronto on Vision Zero initiatives in Weston Village;
- hosting a bike rodeo;
- leveraging the Mid Humber Gap Trail Study and GO/UP Train Station to brand Weston as “The Place Where the Loop Trail Starts and Ends”; and
- collaborating with the Weston Village Historical Association on a “Weston Walk of Fame” and incorporating heritage in public spaces.

Building Relationships

BIA stakeholders and those affiliated with other neighbourhood associations acknowledged the need for the BIA to build, improve, and maintain relationships and networks within the community. Three different groups were highlighted during the engagement activities that the BIA should prioritize relationships with, (1) Planning and Economic Development Staff at the City of Toronto, (2) Developers, and (3) active community groups and associations. Respondents did highlight that the BIA is connected with the resident's association and the historical association within Weston. Respondents emphasized that exploring and expanding collaboration opportunities with these groups should be a priority.

Youth Focused

Youth that were interviewed as part of the intercept interview activity shared a desire for more to do in the area. This was echoed by other groups across the various engagement activities who highlighted that while there is some programming for youth such as Frontlines and Urban Arts, there needs to be more programming, recreational opportunities, and places for youth to gather.

Animation of Space, Greening, and Beautification

Many people who participated in the engagement activities stated that improvements to the public realm and streetscape need to be a priority for the BIA. People want to see sidewalks free of litter, more street furniture, more greenery, improved lighting, and animated public areas.

Community Improvement

A reoccurring sentiment shared by those who participated in the engagement activities is that improvement of the business/retail community in Weston Village requires a holistic approach that considers community improvement at a much broader scale. Generally, people felt that the commercial community would benefit from improvements that are not obviously or directly linked to retail and business improvement. For example, improving recreational programming for youth and advocating to maintain affordable housing stock.

New Development

Across all of the engagement activities people were generally excited about the new developments in the area. People were eager to have more customers in the area. Respondents stated that they want to ensure that the new developments will replace and create more retail space, and that the new developments will enhance and respond to the existing community. There was some concern among people that the new developments would push people out who already live in the area.

Gap Analysis

The table is a visual representation of a gap analysis. The table was informed by the main findings from the engagement activities. The Current State column captures the ways things currently are in Weston. Strengths and challenges are identified in this column. The Needs column are the steps that are required to reach the Future State. The Future State column lists the aspirations for the future. These aspirations are the proposed strategic directions to be included in the strategic plan.

Current State	Needs	Future State
<p>There is low awareness of the role of the WVBIA in the community and community associations are ready to collaborate.</p>	<p>WVBIA Coordinator and additional staff (yet to be hired) are reasonably empowered and resourced to deliver strategic objectives</p> <p>WVBIA Coordinator is reasonably empowered to represent WVBIA among community partners</p>	<p>BIA Staff and Members are the face of WVBIA in the community.</p>
<p>There are disparate and varied relationships with City staff, developers, and community groups.</p>	<p>Build, maintain relationships with City staff (expand and enhance with community planning and economic development, and policing, engineering services, parks)</p> <p>Build, maintain relationships with Developers.</p> <p>Build, maintain relationships with Community Groups and Associations.</p>	<p>WVBIA relies on strong and timely partnerships to leverage local capacity.</p>

<p>Limited retail options and strong competition from commercial plazas outside of the BIA.</p>	<p>Make business ready, BIA-level Market Intelligence, Cluster Analysis and Commercial/Retail Market Analysis available for prospective businesses and investors</p> <p>Leverage City’s economic development resources to maintain a business inventory, turnover, vacancies, and anticipated opportunities and needs.</p> <p>Data is kept up to date and readily available for external use to attract new businesses and other opportunities to the area.</p> <p>Determine appropriate anchors that serve the population living in the area, and advocate to attract these types of businesses / retail.</p> <p>Develop metrics and performance indicators to monitor improvement of business diversity.</p>	<p>Weston Village as the desired home of a rich and diverse landscape of businesses.</p>
<p>Strong sense of place recognized by local residents.</p>	<p>Embrace and celebrate the built and lived history of Weston Village.</p> <p>Enhance discovery through Wayfinding and Biking infrastructure.</p>	<p>Weston Village is recognized as a unique destination in the City of Toronto.</p>
<p>There are concerns among residents that Weston is an unsafe place, particularly after dark. There are perceptions among residents</p>	<p>Litter. Safety.</p>	<p>Weston Village is an inviting and memorable community where people feel comfortable and a sense of belonging.</p>

<p>within the wider City of Toronto that Weston is uninviting.</p>	<p>Lighting. Community Services.</p>	
<p>There is a lack of awareness among area residents and business patrons of the roles and responsibilities of the BIA. The BIA is working to increase business owners' understanding of the capability and representation provided by their BIA.</p>	<p>Leveraging partnerships. Community and Youth Volunteering. Branding.</p>	<p>The WV BIA is seen as an asset to the community and has a strong brand and clear identity.</p>
<p>A community safety audit was conducted by 12 Division, Toronto Police Services. There has been some implementation of recommendations while other recommendations have not been implemented. There has been limited involvement among the broader public and business owners and limited coordination among other City Services involved in maintaining the public realm.</p>	<p>Councillor initiated safety audit that includes multiple city divisions and business owners. Community walk.</p>	<p>Local residents and business owners feel a sense of ownership in enhancing community safety.</p>
<p>There is a desire among youth and caretakers to have more recreation and things to do in the winter months and in the evenings/weekends.</p>	<p>Look for opportunities for partnership and bringing Youth in the decision-making process.</p>	<p>Weston as a place for Youth.</p>
<p>There is diminished activity along the main commercial corridor outside of regular business hours. Residents have expressed feelings of discomfort using these areas.</p>	<p>Transit Service, Seating and Lighting. Promoting and advocating for safe extended operating hours/off-hours businesses. Explore opportunities for evening programming or marquee events</p>	<p>Weston Village as a safe destination at All Hours.</p>

	<p>which could be replicated in Weston Village.</p>	
<p>The BIA is leveraging grants that are available through the City of Toronto. Community associations are willing to partner on funding requests.</p>	<p>Tapping into City Grant Programs</p> <p>Maintaining inventory of available grants, past applications and successful bids undertaken by the BIA, members and community partners</p> <p>Ensure Community Planning recognises the status of the Weston Village Streetscape Master to assist in comment on active development applications and in discussion with neighbourhood developers.</p>	<p>Increased Financial Capacity of the BIA.</p>

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Appendix B

Strategic Directions Quick Reference Matrix

Strategic Direction	Responsibility	Action to Consider	Timeframe	Capacity	Reward
#1 - Improve the visibility of the BIA among Business Owners and expand Business Owner Engagement in the BIA.	BIA Staff with support from Board of Directors	Action 1.1 - Leverage relationships and familiarity of BIA Coordinator to continue to bring more awareness to the work of the BIA in the community.	Long Term	Medium	Low
		Action 1.2 - Develop an information sheet in multiple languages	Quick Win	Low	Medium
		Action 1.3 - Create and implement visibility initiatives (i.e., storefront window stickers, rotating street banners, and “Meet your BIA Board Members” Social Media Campaign.)	Medium Term	Medium	Medium

#2 - Implement Streetscape Master Plan.	Streetscape Sub-Committee Chair	Action 2.1 - Advocate for City Planning to adopt and give status to the BIA's Streetscape Master Plan	Long Term	Medium	High
		Action 2.2 - Pursue active and programmable third spaces as part of streetscape improvement in Weston Village. Incorporate the youth perspective (see strategic direction #4) in the implementation.	Long Term	High	High
		Action 2.3 - Establish a procedure with the City to have the Master Plan shared with Developers and to have City Planning circulate all Development applications to the BIA	Quick Win	Low	Medium
		Action 2.4 - Incorporate Master Plan into Capital Works Budget	Long Term	High	High

#3 - Publicize and promote a positive image of Weston in the local community and with other communities.	Marketing Sub-Committee Chair	Action 3.1 - Leverage physical and historical assets and community strengths to market those outside of Weston Village	Medium Term	Medium	High
		Action 3.2 - Create a Media Strategy	Quick Win	Medium	Medium
		Action 3.3 - Partner with Community Groups for Events, Initiatives and Programs	Medium Term	Medium	Medium
		Action 3.4 - Promote City funded programs to improve storefronts	Quick Win	Low	Low
		Action 3.5 - Invite and host other organizations and BIAs to learn about best practices and projects from other neighbourhoods and communities	Quick Win	Low	Medium

#4 - Include and Engage Youth in Community Decision-Making	Events Sub-Committee Chair	Action 4.1 - Champion a youth leadership role in the community (i.e., advisory committee, Weston Youth Mayor)	Quick Win	Low	High
		Action 4.2 - Collaborate with Youth to plan events and initiatives	Medium Term	Medium	High

#5 - Make Weston Village an inviting and memorable community where people feel comfortable and have a sense of belonging.	Streetscape Sub-Committee Chair	Action 5.1 - Host a Community Safety Audit	Quick Win	Low	Medium
		Action 5.2 - Explore Safety Communication Tools	Quick Win	Low	Low

#6 - Attract a diversity of businesses to create a rich business landscape in Weston Village.	Capacity Development Sub-Committee Chair	Action 6.1 - Perform a market analysis and assessment.	Quick Win	Medium	Medium
		Action 6.2 - Create a strategy to attract retail and business	Long Term	Medium	Medium

#7 - Increase Financial Capacity of BIA.	Capacity Development Sub-Committee Chair	Action 7.1 - Explore potential BIA Boundary expansions.	Long Term	Low	Low
		Action 7.2 - Track grants and funding pools that are currently being accessed by the BIA.	Quick Win	Low	Medium
		Action 7.3 - Identify new grant and funding opportunities and explore opportunities for partnership with other local community groups.	Medium Term	Medium	Medium

